BOOK REVIEWS

REFERENCE SHELF

A Guide to Immunization for Canadians. Prepared by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization 1979. 92 pp. Illust. Health Protection Branch, Laboratory Centre for Disease Control, Department of National Health and Welfare, Ottawa, 1980. Free on request, paperbound. ISBN 0-662-50692-8

Physicians are often asked questions about immunization. This bilingual, pocket-sized booklet supplies most of the answers. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization publishes it to assist in standardizing procedures throughout Canada. In early 1980 the first edition was sent to those physicians likely to consult it, including pediatricians, internists and primary care practitioners.

The booklet provides authoritative comment and advice on the use of all licensed immunizing agents for infectious diseases available in Canada as of April 1979. Appendices include descriptions of newly developed but as yet unlicensed agents and a list of licensed manufacturers' addresses.

After an introductory section on such general considerations as cautions and contraindications, storage of vaccines and vaccination site preparation, there are recommended schedules for immunizing infants and children. Schedules for adults are in the chapter on foreign travel.

The book is then arranged into sections on active and passive immunizing agents. For each agent there are data on the morbidity and mortality in Canada of the disease it protects against. Next is a brief description of the agent and its recommended use, adverse reactions and contraindications.

Revised recommendations from the committee will be incorporated in the next edition of the guide. In the meantime, revisions are published in *Canada Diseases Weekly Report* as they occur. Both the guide and the weekly report are available free on request from the bureau of epidemiology, Department of National Health and Welfare, Ottawa, Ont. K1A 0L2.

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Cancer Chemotherapy Handbook. Robert T. Dorr and William L. Fritz. 785 pp. Illust. Elsevier North-Holland, Inc., New York, 1980. $40, hardbound; $25, paperbound. ISBN 0-444-00330-4, hardbound; ISBN 0-444-00343-6, paperbound

As a practising oncologist I frequently receive calls from chemotherapy nurses or hospital pharmacists to enquire about exotic-sounding drugs with apparently bizarre methods of administration and seemingly incredible dosages. Such is the nature of a specialty in which investigational pharmacology has become an integral part of day-to-day clinical practice.

This book is intended as a basic compendium of most of the chemotherapeutic drugs that were available in late 1979 as either investigational or licensed agents. Although it is the kind of resource book that will rapidly become dated, it should be available to hospital pharmacists and to those administering chemotherapeutic agents.

In addition to the extensive list of drugs, there are useful outlines of the principles of cancer chemotherapy and of the pharmacologic considerations in scheduling this therapy. Of particular value are comprehensive tables summarizing the toxic effects of most of the agents currently available. The 12-page list of important drug interactions associated with chemotherapy is well documented and may be the most practical and useful list of this type in the current literature. The references at the end of each drug section are comprehensive and current, and the text that results from the distillation of these references is succinct and direct. It provides most of the information that is necessary for administering an agent and for recognizing its possible toxic effects. For those who want to become more familiar with a particular agent, this text provides the references to the original literature.

This is a book than can relieve much of the anxiety a clinician may feel when faced with a new drug. However, it may be advisable to buy the less expensive soft-cover edition, as it will probably have to